

Bai Gbala

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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA  
DIASPORA PROJECT

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HAMLINE UNIVERSITY  
June 12, 2008  
St. Paul, Minnesota

TESTIMONY OF  
BAI GBALA

TRC Commissioners:

Chairman Jerome Verdier  
Vice Chairperson Dede Dolopei  
Oumu Syllah  
Sheikh Kafumba Konneh  
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Court Reporter:

Elizabeth J. Gangl  
Registered Professional Reporter

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1 The following proceedings were had and made of

2 Bai Gbala  
record, commencing at approximately 3:58 p.m.

3 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay, I will call on our  
4 next witness, Mr. Bai Gbala. Please come forward.

5 Shall we stand, please?

6 BAI GBALA,  
7 being first duly sworn to tell the truth, testified as  
8 follows:

9 TESTIMONY OF BAI GBALA

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Please be seated.  
11 welcome, Mr. witness, to these public hearings.

12 THE WITNESS: As I said, my name is Bai Gbala. I  
13 was born many, many rice farms ago in a small town of Mea  
14 Town, Grand Gedeh County. I'm a student of political  
15 science, economics and management, and while a student here  
16 in the United States, right here in the Twin Cities,  
17 Minneapolis-St. Paul, University of Minnesota and the College  
18 of St. Thomas, I was active in Liberian community affairs --

19 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I interrupt your  
20 presentation.

21 THE WITNESS: -- in the Union of Liberian  
22 Associations in the Americas. Then I was elected vice  
23 president, '77 to '79, and later president 1980 to 1982.  
24 After graduation I returned home, and there I was a  
25 co-founder of the National Democratic Party of Liberia, the

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1 NDPL. Meanwhile, I served three major Liberian government  
2 administrations, beginning with the People's Redemption  
3 Council, a military government, and later the government of  
4 Dr. Samuel Kanyon Doe, the interim government of Dr. Amos  
5 Sawyer, and the succeeding Council of State Chairpersons of

Bai Gbala

6 Professor David Kpomakpor, Professor Sankawulo, Mrs. Ruth  
7 Sando Perry and, of course, Mr. Charles Ghankay McArthur  
8 Taylor as president. I was a political, economic and  
9 international affairs advisor to all of these organizations,  
10 over just nine months in the Taylor government.

11 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Can I stop you there for  
12 a moment, sir?

13 THE WITNESS: Beg your pardon?

14 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Can I just stop you for  
15 a while?

16 THE WITNESS: Okay.

17 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I presume you're going  
18 into your presentation already, but before that there is some  
19 preliminary information we want to request of you before you  
20 go into it.

21 THE WITNESS: In the Taylor government?

22 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: No, just now.

23 THE WITNESS: My what?

24 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I'm confident you want  
25 to move into your presentation right away.

4

1 THE WITNESS: What I'm just doing is giving you  
2 who I am first, then I will go into my statement before the  
3 council.

4 (Audience reaction.)

5 THE WITNESS: I want you to know, first of all,  
6 what happened, how I got here this time in the United States.

7 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay, but I need to, to  
8 lead you a little bit into your presentation so that we do  
9 not sway on a lot of other things. I understand you want to

10 do a good introduction -- Bai Gbala  
11 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.  
12 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- of yourself, which we  
13 appreciate, and you will have the opportunity to, but I  
14 thought that we should give you a little lead so that you are  
15 lead safely into your presentation.  
16 THE WITNESS: In here now?  
17 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yes. Yeah, here now.  
18 THE WITNESS: Okay. Well, this is what I was  
19 leading to. I'm leading to that.  
20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: No problem.  
21 THE WITNESS: I'm leading to that. May I go  
22 ahead? Okay, okay, go ahead.  
23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: You've answered most of  
24 the questions. One which is important is when did you leave  
25 Liberia and settle in the U.S.?

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1 THE WITNESS: I didn't get that.  
2 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: When did you migrate to  
3 the U.S.? When did you migrate to the U.S.?  
4 THE WITNESS: At this time?  
5 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yes.  
6 THE WITNESS: Oh. Two thousand -- 2004. '2.  
7 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: 2002.  
8 THE WITNESS: Yes.  
9 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Can you kindly  
10 tell -- oh, your date of birth, that is fine. Where do you  
11 reside presently?  
12 THE WITNESS: In Liberia?  
13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Where do you reside

Bai Gbala

14 presently?

15 THE WITNESS: Oh. In Philadelphia.

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Philadelphia.

17 THE WITNESS: Pennsylvania.

18 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. We want to say  
19 welcome, and to also add that this forum -- I hope I can be  
20 as loud as possible -- this forum is intended for us to  
21 review our past, share common experiences in the hope that we  
22 can learn some lessons from the past as a business for  
23 constructing a better future for our country. In such a way  
24 we can promote peace, reconciliation and unity and posterity  
25 may inherit and, unquote, a better environment and, unquote,

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1 through the experiences we have had. This is precisely the  
2 reasons why we have opened this forum up and we, we welcome  
3 you. I would presume you know the Commissioners, I will not  
4 have to do the introduction because you started right away.  
5 So with that, we ask you now to continue with your  
6 presentation.

7 THE WITNESS: Thank you. In fact, that is why  
8 I'm, that is what I'm leading to. I understand the basic  
9 reasoning for being here, and I appreciate that.

10 what I was saying, after nine months in the Taylor  
11 government, I was not only removed for political differences,  
12 policy differences with Taylor, I was arrested on  
13 September 19, 1998, during what is now called the Camp  
14 Junction Road, what Taylor defined a surgical operation by  
15 his forces. I was tried and convicted with 17 others on what  
16 I referred to as false, vicious and politically motivated  
17 charges of treason. We were given the sentence of ten years.

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18 And on appeal to the Supreme Court of Liberia, the court did  
19 not only confirm the lower court decision, but added ten  
20 years, or 20 years in prison.

21 After serving three years in jail, we were released  
22 on the 21st of July, 2001, on what Mr. Taylor defined as  
23 presidential clemency due mainly to political, diplomatic and  
24 economic pressure brought about by the people of Liberia and  
25 the international community led mainly by the United Nations

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1 and the people and government of the United States of  
2 America. This is how I was permitted into this country. I  
3 am here now simply as a visitor.

4 Now I want to go back to some of the issues.  
5 Mr. Chairman, members of the Council, of the Committee, the  
6 Executive Director, members of the Advocates for Human  
7 Justice, distinguished guests, my fellow Liberians, ladies  
8 and gentlemen. I come with greetings to the Commission and  
9 gratitude for the opportunity you afforded me to take part in  
10 these historic hearings that are designed and dedicated to,  
11 to propose national healing, reconciliation and unity, peace  
12 and security necessary for the rebuilding of our country  
13 after the devastating civil war. I wish for you successful  
14 deliberations and the achievement of these noble goals.

15 Like I said, I'm a life-long public servant, former  
16 official of government, committed and dedicated liberal  
17 democrat, one who served our country with diligence,  
18 distinction and credit before, during and after our 15-year  
19 nightmare. I appear before you today simply as one who  
20 witnessed from a ringside seat, so to speak, the motivations  
21 of many of our leading Liberians who brought hell on earth

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22 upon our country; that is, indiscriminate plunder, death and  
23 destruction upon our people. And as such, I want you to know  
24 that I was not a member, a leader, or an actor in any of the  
25 warring factions that took, that took part in, in the

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1 conflict.

2 Indeed, we Liberians owe the survival of our nation  
3 and people to the almighty God and to the generosity and, and  
4 humanity of the government and people of these United States,  
5 the European Union, the United Nations organization and the  
6 Economic Community of West African States. We must give  
7 praise to God and profound gratitude to these international  
8 organizations for coming to our aid during this historic  
9 period of our critical need.

10 Elsewhere, I said that it is necessary that we be  
11 fair, we be factual, indeed because very few of us Liberians,  
12 particularly the so-called, quote-unquote, book people, the  
13 informed, will escape blame one way or the other, neither by  
14 commission or omission, for the 15-year nightmare that  
15 occurred in our country.

16 Now let me go back to my experience. Firstly, the  
17 PRC experience, I'm quite sure you dwell on questions related  
18 to the PRC, and as one who served the PRC as an advisor, my  
19 experience with the PRC can be described as two words, a  
20 nightmare for a student of political science because of the  
21 level of ignorance of statecraft; individuals who do not  
22 have, did not have the preparation of what we call group  
23 dynamics, issues relating to political leadership, what  
24 constitutes that which is referred to as a vital interest of  
25 a nation, especially on the part of our new leaders.

1           May I have some water to drink? Thank you.

2           Secondly, that experience can be described as a  
3 laboratory, an exciting laboratory for a student of political  
4 science because of the age, an average age of 20, and also  
5 the lack of experience for a group of people that were  
6 trained in military science, a situation in which the notions  
7 of democracy are absent. They are taught to obey, obey and  
8 obey. You complain only after you obey. These were the  
9 people, the new people that are put together to rule our  
10 country. So my experience is, is characterized by these,  
11 these two notions.

12           Our job as advisors, Mr. Tambakai Jangaba -- please  
13 speak to his ashes, he's dead now -- and I were reduced  
14 basically to teachers, like professors in the college, in a  
15 college classroom, trying to inform the individuals what it  
16 is that we should do, what it is that we cannot do as leaders  
17 of our country.

18           The next that I want to describe is contained in this  
19 document. As president of the Union of Liberian Associations  
20 in this country, we marched the streets of the major cities  
21 of this country in protest to the political activities at  
22 home. President Tolbert at that time became very concerned  
23 of our, of our activities, so he extended an invitation to us  
24 to meet with him in Monrovia. As president of the union, I  
25 took a delegation of Liberians to Monrovia, and that included

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1 Charles Taylor on that delegation. This is the speech that  
2 we gave at the mansion, and it contains some of the basic



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3 problems that we saw with the government of our country, the  
4 activities of our country, beginning 1847, when it was  
5 founded. I hope that you will have it. It will be here.

6           The second, the second thing that I observed as an  
7 advisor, what's contained in this document, emanating from my  
8 experience with the PRC, and it is entitled "The  
9 Decentralization of Political & Administrative Power in  
10 Liberia," and it is based on what is it that we need. It's  
11 an argument that delineates, chronicles what is it that is  
12 absent in our, in our country, that which also made it  
13 possible for the coup d'etat to occur in, in 1980. These two  
14 documents I will present, I will present to you.

15           As a matter of fact, I have some other documents here  
16 that relate to the issues that are involved in what you're  
17 doing now in order to go back and get an idea on what it is  
18 that Liberia needs.

19           Now to the issue of the insurgency, that which befell  
20 our country, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. On  
21 Christmas Eve, December 24, 1989, the Liberian people,  
22 predominantly Christians and Muslims, were putting final  
23 touches to family get-togethers for the traditional  
24 gift-giving and, of course, dinner after church on Christmas  
25 day, which was to be December 25, the next day. This did not

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1 happen because on that day at 5 p.m., Mr. Charles McArthur  
2 Ghankay Taylor, leader of the NPFL, proclaimed to the world  
3 on "BBC Focus on Africa" that the NPFL has launched an armed  
4 attack against the government of Liberia in Butuo, Nimba  
5 County, some 300 miles away from Monrovia, the seat of  
6 government. Mr. Taylor also declared that the objective, or

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7 what he called, quote-unquote, armed struggle was to,  
8 quote-unquote, remove a dictator, Samuel Doe, from power in  
9 order to restore to the Liberian people, quote-unquote, their  
10 right of free choice in the selection of their leaders.

11           Thereafter, Taylor's armed struggle, or rebellion,  
12 rapidly developed into a willful, systematic manipulation and  
13 exploitation of the simple, traditional, ethnic, tribal and  
14 political differences such that it inflamed passions and gave  
15 rise to the vicious, ethnically driven, deeply divisive  
16 explosion of the national conflict that, as you and I know  
17 today and experienced, severely victimized members of the  
18 entire, the entire citizens or tribes, 16 tribes of the, of  
19 our country. No tribe was spared. Moreover, the NPFL built  
20 its fighting forces by conscious recruitment of 10- to  
21 12-year-old youngsters as combatants. This approach became  
22 the method of operation, or command and control, of almost  
23 all of the other warring factions that took up arms either in  
24 support of or against the NPFL.

25           Resulting from this participation in an experience of

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1 unquestioned political violence that is inherent, inherent in  
2 the armed struggle, these child soldiers became,  
3 quote-unquote, men and women overnight. They, quote-unquote,  
4 learned and now hold a belief that one is free to do as one  
5 wishes or be that which one wants to be, irrespective of law,  
6 requisite training, experience and age, and to make, in most  
7 critical cases, crucial life-and-death decisions.

8           The reported rising wave of crime-rid in Monrovia  
9 today is an indication of this phenomenon. Some of the young  
10 fellows who went into war age 10 to 12 are now 30, 35,

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11 without any training, without any schooling, without any  
12 skills in order to survive in the society that we have in  
13 Monrovia. They turn to robbery, they turn to stealing, they  
14 turn to committing crimes. This is the result of this  
15 phenomenon.

16 Because of the nature and the thrust of the NPFL  
17 armed attack directed against and based upon ethnic tribal  
18 considerations -- and know this, one of the basic reasons of  
19 the issues that are now in Liberia is based on tribe and  
20 ethnicity -- the NPFL directed its attack on the basis of  
21 tribe. And so most of the factions; ULIMO-J, ULIMO-K, Lofa  
22 Divisions, Lofa Defense Force, Nimba Defense Force, LPC,  
23 LURD, MODEL, and et cetera, whether against or in support of  
24 the NPFL, were organized principally along ethnic tribal  
25 lines. These were the individuals, these were the

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1 organizations that are alleged to have committed, violated  
2 the rules of arms, armed engagement and, therefore, are  
3 guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity as the NPFL.

4 As an official of government at that time, our search  
5 for the achievement of this, of the immediate short-term  
6 objective of the peaceful resolution of the conflict took us  
7 to several foreign countries. We traveled all over the  
8 country trying to bring peace to the, to the country.  
9 However, I want to describe for you some of the reasons why  
10 it became impossible.

11 The process became much more difficult to achieve  
12 because of the result of the vicious, deeply rooted dimension  
13 of ethnic tribal bigotry, and what is that? Jealousy, envy,  
14 hatred, antagonism, prejudice, discrimination, and et cetera,

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15 all fueled directly by consideration of ethnicity and tribe.  
16 In turn, flowing directly from these considerations and the  
17 necessarily required national ingredients of "forgive if not  
18 forget" and national reconciliation for long-term national  
19 peace, unity and security now appear to be in trouble.

20 I believe, ladies and gentlemen, however, that it is  
21 not necessary for me to burden you with the reported official  
22 statistics of our national tragedy, neither to describe blow  
23 by blow the description of the human, human rights  
24 violations, information with which you are already familiar.  
25 Indeed, you are informed that an estimated 300,000 people

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1 lost their lives, several hundreds of thousands were injured  
2 as well as displaced, while thousands of children, boys and  
3 girls, who lost their parents and guardians became helpless  
4 orphans.

5 In the light of the enormity of the war crimes and  
6 crimes against humanity, that is genocide, torture and rape,  
7 allegedly committed by the warring factions, I argue  
8 elsewhere that in the political community that experienced  
9 armed conflict, as the Republic of Liberia, in which unarmed,  
10 innocent civilians, men, women and children, were brutally  
11 killed, and unarmed, surrendered or captured prisoners of war  
12 were inhumanely treated, killed in violation of the rules of  
13 engagement or the Geneva Convention, a war crimes tribunal is  
14 usually established for the trial, open, free and fair, of  
15 the accused and the punishment of the guilty consistent with  
16 law. In this way, a lawful housecleaning is undertaken for  
17 healing of the wounds inflicted for reunification and  
18 reconciliation of the citizens, and thereby sends out a

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19 strong message that no one should be given preferential  
20 treatment, irrespective of one's sociopolitical standing in  
21 that political community. This approach also provides a  
22 sense of fair play, remedy, relief and personal satisfaction  
23 for the families of loved ones victimized by the conflict,  
24 unquote.

25 Now the Commission. After an impassioned and

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1 objective, comparative analysis of the merits and demerits of  
2 the elements and relevance of our several judicial systems,  
3 with particular emphasis on war crimes tribunal and the Truth  
4 Commission, the Liberian delegation to the Accra, Ghana peace  
5 conference on Liberia, sponsored and facilitated by the  
6 International Group on Liberia, the ICGL, decided for the  
7 Truth Commission. Unlike a war crimes tribunal, the Truth  
8 Commission is a temporary body within, operating within a  
9 defined period of time in a given country. It is authorized  
10 to investigate human rights violations with responsibility to  
11 submit a final report. Moreover, the Truth Commission is, in  
12 fact, a response to the transition to democracy in developing  
13 countries such as Liberia since the '70s, and forms a part of  
14 the healing and peace process, indeed to induce peaceful  
15 coexistence among the many ethnic tribal groups. These  
16 conditions are significant characteristics within the  
17 Liberian experience.

18 A simple prosecutorial approach, as required by the  
19 case of war crimes tribunal, may be perceived by families of  
20 the accused as vengeance, and therefore exacerbates not only  
21 the pain and anguish of a trial but also ethnic tribal  
22 antagonism and hatred; hence, the Truth and Reconciliation

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23 Commission. However, there are some issues that I think,  
24 which, which was raised that you will take into  
25 consideration.

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1           Successful performance or the achievement of these  
2 defined responsibilities depends upon appearance before and  
3 cooperation with the TRC by victims, perpetrators of the  
4 violence, and their collaborators, in the hearings such as  
5 this one designed for confessions, repentance, forgiveness  
6 and reconciliation. However, this process also depends in  
7 turn upon the legitimacy of the TRC; that is, its creation  
8 and sanction by law, and particularly the support, the  
9 cooperation and commitment given to it by the government,  
10 individual officials, government and the Liberian people.

11           On the basis of prevailing press reports that we've  
12 seen here, clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of  
13 leading officials of our government at home indicate they,  
14 reports indicate that they are not willing to appear before  
15 the Commission. They have rejected and are rejecting  
16 appearance. Furthermore, press reports that there is a  
17 disappointing squabble within the TRC that the press referred  
18 to as a divided house and all. I'm quite sure you are aware  
19 of this, this, this thing here. And it disappoints -- this  
20 is an apparent political posturing by some members of the  
21 Commission. This condition definitely does not lend  
22 legitimacy, indeed useful purpose, to the Truth and  
23 Reconciliation Commission.

24           It is now conceived by the average Liberian as a  
25 toothless body, incapable of applying its subpoena muscle.

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1 The Commission has a muscle, a subpoena muscle to, to  
2 command, you know, these powerful government officials and  
3 others known to have committed heinous crimes and crimes  
4 against humanity before it. This condition raises troubling,  
5 painful questions, given the prevailing sociocultural and  
6 economic and political realities of our nation. I say this  
7 so that in your deliberation, you can use these in reaching  
8 the conclusions that are inherent in your terms of reference.

9 Now national reconciliation, I want to share with you  
10 what we have talked about elsewhere with respect to  
11 particularly this issue of national reconciliation upon which  
12 the Commission has now embarked. In this light, I want to  
13 ask your permission to share my thoughts with you, expressed  
14 elsewhere some two years ago, because they are relevant to  
15 these hearings. Under the title of "National Reconciliation:  
16 The Road to Peace, Unity, Security and Peace Among Our  
17 People," I held that during and after our ethnically driven,  
18 deeply divisive, historic tragedy, the need for national  
19 healing of the deep wounds for bringing -- bridging the  
20 profoundly wide, ethnic tribal cleavage is created for  
21 reunifying the once-unified, once-peaceful, once-proud people  
22 in peace, unity and security became evident and compelling.  
23 Presumably, it was this realization, and towards the  
24 achievement of this goal, that the government of President  
25 Charles Ghankay Taylor established a new, full-fledged agency

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1 with the title of National Reconciliation and Reintegration  
2 Commission, the NNRC (sic), to pursue this goal, including

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3 conflict analysis, prevention, management and peaceful,  
4 rational resolution of national conflicts. However, the  
5 performance of this agency, headed by Mr. Taylor's handpicked  
6 (inaudible) Liberia confidante is public knowledge of  
7 incompetence, inaction and failure, and saw the new armed  
8 hostilities erupt and explode in Lofa County, in the Lofa  
9 County conflict in April 1999. I'm quite sure most of you  
10 are aware of that.

11 In an apparent response to the Lofa County conflict,  
12 which added insult to injury, the Taylor government announced  
13 that it will hold a national conference, reconciliation  
14 conference in Monrovia in July 2002. In a meeting with  
15 President Taylor, and later in a memorandum dated May 9,  
16 2002, addressed to the chairman of the newly appointed  
17 conference organizing committee, we raised the issue of the  
18 ongoing conflict in Lofa County, arguing that it is not  
19 reasonable to hold a conference on peace and reconciliation  
20 in one part of the war-torn nation while there are ongoing  
21 armed hostilities, destruction, human suffering and death in  
22 the other, as was now prevailing in western Liberia.

23 As expected, my intervention was overruled and the  
24 conference was held, but it failed to achieve the expected  
25 desirable results, as we all now know. The Lofa County

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1 conflict gradually developed into a full-scale national  
2 confrontation that led to the resignation and exile of  
3 President Charles Taylor to the Federal Republic of Nigeria  
4 in 2003. We Liberians had hoped that the general and  
5 presidential elections of July 1997, which brought Mr. Taylor  
6 to power, ended the, and ended the first phase of our 15-year



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7 conflict, settled the contentious issues of national  
8 political leadership and initially -- that initially  
9 motivated the crisis, and that we were out of the woods, so  
10 to speak.

11           Regretably this was not the case, for elections alone  
12 do not and could not resolve our deep-seated historical,  
13 ethnic, tribal and political divisions creating suspicion,  
14 fear, distrust, antagonism, prejudice and discrimination  
15 boarding on hatred among our tribal grouping that have  
16 remained unattended for decades, since 1847. That I'm quite  
17 sure most, most of you know.

18           In the light of these and other conditions  
19 prevailing, new efforts for national peace and reconciliation  
20 are needed to inspire and energize Liberians into a shared,  
21 collective mission for national reconciliation and healing.  
22 This is appropriate to what the Commission is now embarking  
23 upon. It is important to note that some of the fundamental  
24 root causes, and therefore sources of conflicts in our  
25 country, are found in our history, Liberian history. They

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1 have been and are an inordinate quest for political power and  
2 greed for economic wealth, perceived or believed to be  
3 associated with political power. However, to be meaningful,  
4 substantive, and to achieve long-lasting impact, national  
5 reconciliation should and must transcend issues that lend  
6 themselves to the naked quest for partisan political power.  
7 As a body to which critical issues are presented, debated and  
8 addressed for the benefit of all Liberians, it should not,  
9 and must not be a forum for grandstanding, finger pointing,  
10 blame games in an effort to achieve and gain partisan

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11 political goals.

12 Ladies and gentlemen, reconciliation is taking  
13 collective responsibility for the nation's problems. It is  
14 an opportunity for tolerance, for frank, candid and  
15 constructive exchange of ideas and opinions with focus on  
16 issues rather than on personalities, an opportunity in which  
17 problems are identified, defined and solutions advanced, for  
18 reconciliation is a serious business because the future and  
19 survival of our country is at stake.

20 I submit that conflicts are natural and proper to  
21 human society. Indeed, conflict sometimes provides  
22 opportunities for rational, necessary change. The challenge,  
23 however, lies often in the political will to build enabling  
24 capacities necessary to resolve conflicts through peaceful,  
25 nonviolent, rational approaches. Self-achieving societies,

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1 like the United States, provide mechanisms or institutions  
2 such as efficient, effective police, transparent courts, free  
3 and fair electoral systems to manage conflicts, maintain law  
4 and order, and promote peace, unity and national collective  
5 security.

6 The ultimate goal of reconciliation is to, is to  
7 initiate a new national beginning of maximum, rewarding  
8 participation for social integration and growth at higher  
9 levels of development. Reconciliation, peace, national  
10 security and unity are the foundation upon which mobilization  
11 of the required national will and commitment is built as the  
12 catalyst for the process of a new national renewal. And  
13 finally, reconciliation for peacemaking, unity and security  
14 are long-term endeavors. They require long-term commitments.

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15 As such, this is not unexpected. Given the deep-seated and  
16 long-term nature of our problems, they cannot be  
17 satisfactorily and rationally addressed and resolved  
18 overnight. It will require sustained and durable efforts,  
19 structures development, process refinement, further  
20 consultations, joint planning and programming and resource  
21 mobilization. Accordingly, the government and people of  
22 Liberia should and must commit themselves to a long-term  
23 undertaking to achieve and sustain real peace, unity,  
24 political stability and security through national  
25 reconciliation. This commitment, ladies and gentlemen,

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1 should and must be maintained and demonstrated, irrespective  
2 of which administration holds political power.

3 Thank you. I will be available to answer any  
4 questions that you have on the prior government before the  
5 coup d'etat, the PRC, and what we should do today to move  
6 forward.

7 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.

8 THE WITNESS: These are the documents that should  
9 go to them. I will give you this, after the questions I will  
10 give you this.

11 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I presume you are  
12 surrendering those documents to us, sir? I presume you are  
13 sharing those documents with us?

14 THE WITNESS: Yeah, I will share all the documents  
15 with you.

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. You will kindly  
17 initial them?

18 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

Bai Gbala

19 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay.

20 THE WITNESS: I have my addresses in here.

21 Everyone is in this. All of this is in here together.

22 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much, the  
23 witness, for your presentation, and your elaborate expose on  
24 the forward-looking processes that we as a Commission needs  
25 to take into consideration.

23

1 THE WITNESS: I can't hear you.

2 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I want to thank you for  
3 your elaborate presentation, especially your concentration on  
4 the forward-looking processes you outlined that are necessary  
5 for us to achieve our job and for the people of Liberia to  
6 have genuine reconciliation. We thank you for those  
7 insights, and Commissioners will ask you questions, which I'm  
8 sure will border on mostly your experiences during the  
9 conflict period from 1979 to 2003. Thank you very much.

10 Sheikh?

11 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you  
12 very much, Bai Gbala, for your presentation. I have a few  
13 questions to ask. First, you made now to understand that at  
14 a certain period you became vice president and president of  
15 ULAA, and it is my belief that before becoming vice president  
16 and president respectively, you were first a member, perhaps  
17 founding member, of ULAA. With all what has taken place,  
18 from the day of the formation of ULAA up to 2003, if you are  
19 asked to describe the role of ULAA in both pre-war and war,  
20 as well as post-war era, what would be your comment?

21 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Sheikh. Disappointing.  
22 My answer would be disappointing. There is a document that I

Bai Gbala

23 include in there, I include in the presentation to you on  
24 ULAA. I argue that individuals who become leaders of ULAA  
25 must be Liberian citizens. I found here that some are not

24

1 Liberians, and I believe that we cannot entrust the issues  
2 that are concerned with ULAA, that are basically on the, the  
3 rights of Liberians in this country and the rights of  
4 Liberians in Liberia, to individuals who are non-Liberians.

5 The second issue is, I believe that in the past  
6 Liberians have not argued reasonably, rationally, rationally  
7 our presentation to the American people, and that ULAA was  
8 suitably positioned to do that. They are not doing that.  
9 Right now we have the issue of DED. Liberians are subjected,  
10 as a matter of fact, quite soon some Liberians will be  
11 deported. ULAA is supposed to have taken this issue to do  
12 so. They are not doing that. That document is, is inside  
13 there, you will read it.

14 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you.  
15 You also said in your testimony that PRC was a nightmare. My  
16 question is how long did you serve the government that you  
17 declare as a nightmare? How long did you serve it? And why  
18 you continued to serve it?

19 THE WITNESS: I served PRC for, oh, PRC came to  
20 power from, from August 1980, I went home in August 1980, up  
21 to when the, we went to civilian government. And, like I  
22 said, it was really a nightmare simply because Jangaba and  
23 myself discovered a lack of knowledge, lack of the kind of  
24 situation that is required for national leadership. Of  
25 course, this is not only in Liberia. In third-world

25

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1 countries you find that individuals who accede political  
2 power through what are called the accident of history, that  
3 is, they shoot their way to the mansion, the presidential  
4 palace, these people usually do not come with training that  
5 are prerequisite for leadership. I find that among the PRC.  
6 But it was also an exciting experience, a laboratory for a  
7 student of political science simply because of the age and,  
8 and the lack of experience. Well, I can say this to you,  
9 sir. Advisor/advisee relationship is that you advise and  
10 they implement. And in, in the third-world countries, they  
11 only bring in highly trained personnel to advise simply as a  
12 symbol of window dressing so the outside donors will believe  
13 that, oh, we saw so and so people, we gave the necessary  
14 resources that are necessary, but the leaders keep you at an  
15 arm's length. We can demonstrate that through instances.  
16 And if you look at my, my file that is the archives at the  
17 state capital, you see on every issue that crossed my desk we  
18 do an analysis and present that for action. Implementation,  
19 it's a responsibility of ministers, not the advisor.

20 So I've been with the PRC since 1980 to, we went to a  
21 civilian government and, of course, Tambakai and myself were  
22 instrumental in prescribing the process that brought us to  
23 civilian government, brought us to civilian government. As a  
24 matter of fact, the selection of the individuals who became  
25 the Commission, all these were things that we, we, we

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26

1 assisted in bringing, bringing it to bear. So 1980 to 1986,  
2 with the PRC.

3 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: But you don't  
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Bai Gbala

4 conclude that while you serve a government, that you were  
5 just a window curtain and them, it was a nightmare, and why  
6 you continued to do so?

7 THE WITNESS: Oh, we made, we made -- as a matter  
8 of fact, you know, we spoke very candidly and in no uncertain  
9 terms, and this is a matter of record, but we believed that  
10 it is better to continue to, to continue to push for change  
11 from the inside rather than being on the outside. And, in  
12 fact, things would have been worse if we were not available.

13 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: The PRC made  
14 several promises to the Liberian people. One of them was by  
15 1985, the country will be turned over to, quote-unquote, the  
16 civilians.

17 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.

18 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: By 1983-'84,  
19 that phraseology was changed to "Liberia will be returned to  
20 civilian rule."

21 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.

22 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: And in order  
23 to change from "turning over to civilians" to "a civilian  
24 rule," you said you was a co-foundant of NDPL.

25 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes.

□

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1 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: An  
2 institution, a leadership that you served with frustration.  
3 How can you exonerate yourself from that dramatic change of a  
4 military man transforming itself to a civilian so that the  
5 word, "turning over to civilians," be changed to say "a  
6 civilian rule," where it was said that leopard, the skin of  
7 leopard carry the same name. whether it is the leopard skin,

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8 whether it is the meat; leopard must go alone. why did you  
9 take the courage to become a co-foundant and then attempting  
10 to exonerate yourself from the mishaps that took place?

11 THE WITNESS: First of all, I do not see any  
12 fundamental difference between a civilian gov -- civilian  
13 rule. You were saying returned to civilian government or a  
14 civilian rule. I don't see any difference in that.  
15 Secondly, I am not excusing myself from what I did. Not at  
16 all. I'm saying what I did and what the results were. You  
17 know, in the government or in any institutions there are  
18 division of authority, division of, division of labor. My  
19 responsibility was to advise. And it is the responsibility  
20 of the advisee, the advisee, advisee/advisor relationship is  
21 that the advisor performs. Policy development, policy  
22 prescription and policy implementation have those who perform  
23 those respective responsibilities. I'm not excusing myself  
24 at all. Not at all.

25 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you.

28

1 You talk about decentralization in a document that you  
2 presented to a national conference in 1998.

3 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.

4 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: When did you  
5 grasp this idea, when you served the PRC government, the NDPL  
6 government, all the transitional administrations, you had the  
7 opportunity at the time to project this into your  
8 policy-making process as an advisor to these institutions?

9 THE WITNESS: Thank you. The theory of  
10 organizations, those who are students of organizations find  
11 that structure influences behavior. If you set up a



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12 corporation and define that corporation in terms of rules and  
13 regulations, people who are in the organization follow those  
14 rules. In our government, the unitary system defines the  
15 activities of individuals in government. Now my experience  
16 from the PRC detected this document. We need a fundamental  
17 change in our country. For example, I'll give you one  
18 example. On the day of the coup d'etat, the next day -- I  
19 was in the United States -- it is said that the president of  
20 the Central Bank of Liberia, when they gathered behind the  
21 executive mansion, took \$200,000 to President Doe, or Head of  
22 State Doe, and he said, what am I to do with this? He said,  
23 you are the president now. Yeah, that is the way it is done.  
24 You see? Structure. The way things are done defines the  
25 activities of individuals. This is why we presented -- if

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1 you go through it, you will find the instances that are  
2 responsible for the conditions that we have in Liberia today.  
3 We outline them point by point. We argue that until we  
4 devise a method that will address the issues that are  
5 prevalent in our, in our society, we will continue to have  
6 the problems that we have today. So this is why it's based  
7 on my experience from the PRC --

8 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you  
9 very much.

10 THE WITNESS: -- in 1998.

11 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you  
12 very much.

13 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

14 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Mr. Hearing  
15 officer, kindly --

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16 THE WITNESS: Huh?

17 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: No, I'm talking to  
18 the hearing officer. Kindly give me the file that was  
19 presented by the witness.

20 HEARING OFFICER: He has no signatures yet.

21 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Okay. Just let me  
22 look at it and I will pass it right back to him before the  
23 audience.

24 THE WITNESS: No, you can take it. I have, I have  
25 what I want.

□

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1 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Mr. Witness, I  
2 want to say thank you very much for coming and giving your  
3 testimony, giving your advice and telling us what you  
4 observed or what you heard or what you read, and also  
5 presenting to us these documents what would be documents that  
6 you participated in. You started off by saying that you were  
7 not an actor onto the warring factions, but you did admit  
8 that you were an advisor. These documents, as I see, you  
9 talk about the ULAA statement, and you consider yourself then  
10 in those there to be silent watchers, which will be  
11 considered this document to be you all had a vision, you're  
12 visionaries. This other document here show that when you  
13 were advisor, or the one that you got before you, because  
14 it's not in there, advisor to the social, political and  
15 economic administration of Liberia at that time, so you were  
16 also an actor. Now as you sit and telling us, sit before us  
17 now in the United States and giving us all this, advising us  
18 for now, and teaching us --

19 THE WITNESS: No, I'm not teaching you.

Bai Gbala

20 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Yes.

21 THE WITNESS: I can't teach you.

22 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: We could -- yes,  
23 you're teaching us all these, because we'll take these, we  
24 can consider you almost a retired commentator, teacher or  
25 explaining now why those things happened.

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1 THE WITNESS: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: So we do, now you  
3 are an old man who, in terms of politics, dreaming, having a  
4 vision, acting as now a dreamer. We thank you very much for  
5 playing your part, because from 19 -- in 31 years now, up to  
6 date, when you started 1977 as vice president of ULAA, and up  
7 to today's date, June 12th, 2008, being a teacher, dreamer  
8 and commentator, that's been 31 years where you have been  
9 actively involved in politics for two decades, 20 years, from  
10 1977 -- no. Yeah. 1997 --

11 THE WITNESS: 30.

12 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Yeah, 31 years.

13 THE WITNESS: 30 years.

14 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Okay. Now before  
15 going into this, I would like to make two comments, comment  
16 on two things, recent happenings. You talk about that the  
17 TRC is divided.

18 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

19 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: And because of  
20 what you've read, because of the division, it seem as though  
21 the TRC will be a toothless bulldog. I want to assure you in  
22 this public manner and those who feel that way that, one, the  
23 TRC is not divided on the issue of the mandate for which they

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24 took the oath to deliver to the Liberian people, because the  
25 TRC, as it is now, have gone beyond all other TRCs that have

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1 been established, and there have been 29 now, because not  
2 only have we just stayed in Liberia but we've reached out to  
3 the Diaspora. There were nine commissioners, one retired,  
4 Bishop Kulah in Nigeria, and there are eight commissioners,  
5 and as you see, we sit, we are eight commissioners here, and  
6 we are doing the work of the TRC under this mandate. So to  
7 those who feel there is a division, is not, that division  
8 does not go to the extent of our work, because we represent a  
9 cross-section of the Liberian people. We were not put here  
10 by ourselves, we were recommended and went through a panel of  
11 experts.

12 You talk about conflict. There must be conflict for  
13 there to be a conflict resolution. So we thank you all for  
14 taking note of that, and as I say now, that's why I'm saying  
15 you're a teacher, and we will take note of your teachings and  
16 your reprimand to us.

17 Secondly, the issue of those in Liberia, political  
18 leaders who said they would not come to the TRC. Some are  
19 rumors, and you know cheap is talk and also writing now is --  
20 because what you write, people will read more. I want to say  
21 to you that the TRC has a mandate, and under that they have a  
22 mechanism under which, if people don't want to come, we  
23 invite you. We can initiate that through the, we have a  
24 magistrate, and everything we do, we don't do it in public,  
25 because ever since we've been here we've been having in

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1 camera hearings, so what we talk and hear inside of the  
2 public is not known. I want you to know that our magistrate  
3 have already been using his subpoena power, and contrary to  
4 what you hear, from the President of the Republic of Liberia,  
5 Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, she said she will come to the  
6 TRC, she said it to our hearings. On the opening day of  
7 hearings she was present, and she says she will come to the  
8 TRC if called upon. And not only that, she urged all members  
9 of her government, the legislature and the cabinet and every  
10 other Liberian to come to the TRC. And she promised the  
11 support, the government to support the TRC, and the majority  
12 of our money come from the government. So those who would  
13 not come, we've always been, see, we invite you to come, but  
14 if you do not come, we will stretch out our arms to get you.  
15 And believe me or not, we are not toothless bulldogs. Thank  
16 you.

17 And thanks for, we will look at these historical  
18 documents and, as I say, from the visionaries, the actors, to  
19 the teachers, explainators and dreamers, and we will assess  
20 and they will become part of history. We will determine with  
21 our recommendations, and history, our posterity alone, will  
22 also judge those who had a part to play in our history.  
23 Thank you. Yes?

24 THE WITNESS: I, I cited the source of this  
25 condition that you describe. I said on the basis of press --

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1 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: -- release.

2 THE WITNESS: -- press reports, and it will be  
3 nice for us in the Diaspora to get a decisive press response

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4 by the Commission. It is said that President Ellen  
5 Johnson-Sirleaf will write a memoir and, of course, Prince  
6 Johnson, I have the documents in my briefcase, Prince Johnson  
7 said over his dead body, until they go bring Doe, and Doe is  
8 dead, he's not going to testify.

9 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Mr. --

10 THE WITNESS: Now just one second, please. The  
11 reason I say that is I believe in the process of the TRC,  
12 because I think national reconciliation for security, unity  
13 is, is very well necessary in our country today, given the  
14 ethnic, tribal divisions that we have. So now the average  
15 person in the street say, hey, you know, Prince Johnson was a  
16 major actor in the, in the tragedy. If he goes to the press  
17 and say I'm not going there, then the people will say, well,  
18 wait a minute, what is this? And you have the political,  
19 legal muscle of a subpoena --

20 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Yeah.

21 THE WITNESS: -- like you said, so I understand  
22 what you say. I believe in what you're doing. And I would  
23 love to see that, you know, why won't somebody sitting write  
24 in the paper? I will, I will submit myself willingly. I do  
25 not have to wait until I'm called. If you are here, I will

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1 come to testify if you want. And those people who are, who  
2 are accused of human rights violations in our country, people  
3 who are responsible for the death and destruction in our  
4 country, for thousands of Liberians in this country today and  
5 elsewhere, they should come and say something. Talk about  
6 confession, forgive if not forget. That's all I'm trying to  
7 say. I'm just saying so, so the Commission will know what we

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8 here are thinking.

9 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: You're --

10 THE WITNESS: But I'm not accusing the Commission  
11 of anything.

12 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: No, we just  
13 explaining and, yes, also, yes, thank you, because you're,  
14 what you are observing, many others, too, but we are just  
15 explaining what, there is a time now, the witnesses mostly,  
16 some perpetrators, alleged perpetrators come on their own,  
17 and we also have a time, we have a right way to subpoena.  
18 And I also want you to know that other Liberians have been,  
19 government officials have been subpoenaed, I mean they fight  
20 it, and they have been giving statements also. At a proper  
21 time it will be heard.

22 Now, Mr. Witness, you've just said, because under the  
23 TRC mandate that's what we're supposed to do, make  
24 recommendations for amnesty if someone applies and meet the  
25 requirement, and to recommend prosecution for those who have

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1 violated international humanitarian law. So after reviewing  
2 all this, that's why we came and asking the public and  
3 Liberians, actors, visionaries and dreamers, to help us, give  
4 us recommendations, so it would not just be the eight  
5 commissioners, but the recommendations for all Liberians. So  
6 thank you very much again.

7 THE WITNESS: You said something that I want to  
8 say something to. The reports that you write after your  
9 deliberations will go to the government and then the  
10 government will approve before action is taken. Now these  
11 are the same people who seem to have some consideration about

12 appearing before you. Bai Gbala This is why I'm saying -- and I'm glad  
13 that you've taken notice of it. If people in the senate, you  
14 know, the senate is the, is the upper house of the  
15 legislature, if they are not appearing, then are they going  
16 to sustain the report that you send? So these are the kind  
17 of issues, and I think law is, you have the law to compel  
18 these people to come, but since they are not, well, I'm  
19 satisfied.

20 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you.

21 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Witness, for  
23 your presentation. Though you did not see me, I was  
24 listening. I just have a cold so I had to go in the back.  
25 But I have four questions I would like to share.

37

1 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

2 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: The issues that you  
3 brought up earlier, I believe the Chair will address himself  
4 to that later, but I will just focus on my questions.

5 One, you talked about the unitary government of  
6 Liberia in the past as a structural form that may have  
7 dictated certain behavior patterns in our politicians, such  
8 as the 200,000 being offered to the big man since he was the  
9 head of the pyramid. But then I wonder, as one of the  
10 pioneers in organizing the NDPL and the new government who  
11 had that glorious opportunity to rewrite our constitution,  
12 why didn't that consideration of a change of structure be put  
13 forth at that time? Okay, that's one question.

14 THE WITNESS: Thank you. well, I don't want to  
15 say here that I was overruled but, you see, in a democracy,



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16 the majority rule. Even an advisor with political training  
17 can be overruled. We have foreseen what you are trying, what  
18 you are saying. Inherent in the structure of government that  
19 we have now, it would not be possible to do some of the  
20 things that, that we described. And a political party has an  
21 executive committee. It is that committee that approves  
22 recommendations that go into the, the implementations and  
23 policy prescriptions that you come up with. So it is this  
24 reason, since I did not have the opportunity to see this  
25 thing through, I went to a conference, you know, there's a

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1 Conference 2024 for the Future of Liberia, and that's where I  
2 presented the paper. Again this was in 1998. We still have  
3 the same conditions.

4 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you, I  
5 understand.

6 THE WITNESS: Now I would like to see a government  
7 at home that would think about addressing the issue of  
8 reforms that are ordained towards change, restructure,  
9 reorganization of our government, along the lines that will  
10 be responsive to the needs of the Liberian people in 21st  
11 Century Liberia. I'm not talking about yesterday. The idea  
12 of pro-democracy, the idea of a pro-democracy movement that  
13 is worldwide today is not talking about democracy in the  
14 medieval age.

15 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you. Because  
16 of time I just wanted to move on, but I understand your key  
17 point.

18 THE WITNESS: That is why.

19 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: The next one --

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20 THE WITNESS: That is the condition.

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: -- is that we heard  
22 that there was a time where the late President Doe had  
23 seriously considered not running politically, he wanted to  
24 just turn over the government. But then you now, being one  
25 of those who organized the NDPL, which is the political

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1 platform that he used, I wonder whether you can give us any  
2 clue as to why he suddenly changed his mind and then went  
3 through that process that ended up with the highjacking of  
4 the, a political position at that time?

5 THE WITNESS: Well, let me say one thing to you,  
6 Mr. Coleman. I did not know Samuel Doe before. I could not  
7 have known him because he was far below where I operated  
8 politically. His group, issues of this nature come up, it is  
9 his group that make those decisions. As a matter of fact, I  
10 want to give you an example. There was a chairman on the PRC  
11 who was responsible for judicial issues, and they tend to  
12 interfere in cases before the courts. So somebody came to me  
13 in the capital. I wrote a memorandum that here in the  
14 capital, we are not courts. Issues before the courts must be  
15 decided on the basis of law; therefore, do not send a paper  
16 to the court telling them not to go into a given case. It  
17 was a Lebanese, a Lebanese who sue another Lebanese for  
18 \$1 million, a \$1 million premium. And because he knows that  
19 the case will go against him, he came to this PRC chairman to  
20 intervene. So I told him you couldn't do it. The next day  
21 he barged into my office with his gun drawn, "I'm going to  
22 kill you. You were in America when we were doing this thing,  
23 you don't know anything about it. Isn't this what the other,

24 all the people were doing?" Bai Gbala So I said, "Go ahead. If you  
25 kill me, the gun that you have in your hand, the uniforms on

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1 your back, you wouldn't know how to get them. It is people  
2 like me who go after them. So you go ahead and kill me."  
3 slowly he sank into his seat and that issue went away.

4 This is the nature, this was the nature of what we  
5 did at the capital. These young people did not have an idea  
6 of the relative performance of the issues of law. They did  
7 not. And in the political party, I was, I served as the  
8 policy theoretician and director of press and public affairs,  
9 but people came before me and implementation. You were not  
10 here when this thing happened, the people were doing all  
11 these things, so this is why. Now I see an opportunity.  
12 with the Commission composed of individuals who understand  
13 the process, I think we ought to go after change in Liberia.

14 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay. Thank you. I  
15 can imagine it seems how frustrating your life must have been  
16 during that time. First of all, another question, the third  
17 one. I notice, as I look at your presentation, you were  
18 politically active throughout our investigation period from  
19 1979 to 2003 almost, and you were someone who was there as an  
20 advisor helping and guiding the process. What would you  
21 summarize as your personal successes or major learning  
22 experiences during that period? And if you want to mention  
23 your failures, that could be there also.

24 THE WITNESS: You mean from now on?

25 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: No, during that

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1 period. Because you, from what you're telling me is like,  
2 you were like a man of frustration; recommending, hoping, but  
3 then nothing was happening.

4 THE WITNESS: You know, I --

5 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: So were there  
6 anything, anything that you found that you succeeded at,  
7 major, that you would like to share with us as we try to  
8 understand this?

9 THE WITNESS: I served, I served as a member of  
10 most of the delegations to peace conferences throughout the  
11 conflict. And he was one of, one of the individuals that I  
12 worked with in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the first NPFL  
13 conference that we went to, to Banjul, to Bamako, to  
14 Monrovia, to Yamoussoukro twice, to Abuja twice, to Dakar, to  
15 Geneva, to Cotonou, to Akosombo. In all of this, the  
16 military, the military preposition superseded. You present  
17 an analysis of the issues based on your experience, based on  
18 your knowledge, and the conditions that I expected  
19 internationally. These people look at Liberia as being an  
20 island.

21 Today what I'm saying is there are, we must disabuse  
22 ourselves of this, this notion of tribe, you know, Congo,  
23 Americo, and country. The results of the, of the conflict,  
24 this conflict that has killed so many people, can be traced  
25 to ethnic exclusivity. It could be traced to that. We want

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1 to make sure that every Liberian, every Liberian has, you  
2 know, a stick, and the participation of this new  
3 participatory democracy that we believe is coming to Liberia,  
4 not only in building electoral coalition, but we must

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5 transcend the ethnic, tribal divide.

6           That is the case that I'm -- all the young people in  
7 this country, we're telling them, look, if you come from  
8 whatever county, that does not matter. What is it that you  
9 can do for your country? What is it that you are prepared to  
10 do for the people of Liberia? This is what we are, we are  
11 preaching, and we are also preaching the issue of structure.  
12 You know, structure influences behavior. Go back to  
13 organization theory. If you are, if I am in an organization,  
14 what is required of you written is just what you follow. And  
15 in our country today, you look at the corruption that people  
16 are talking about. Comes about simply because these people  
17 do what they have done all along. Therefore, we need change,  
18 comprehensive transformation, socioeconomic, of the Liberian,  
19 Liberian experience.

20           COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: So in -- thank you.  
21 So in essence, I mean, there is no success but at least  
22 you've learned a lesson that we've got to overcome this  
23 ethnicity and we need to upgrade our people's --

24           THE WITNESS: Yeah.

25           COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: -- consciousness

□

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1 and --

2           THE WITNESS: Yeah.

3           COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay.

4           THE WITNESS: We have to overcome ethnicity. It's  
5 a critical issue.

6           COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: So that is our  
7 mutual challenge as we go into the --

8           THE WITNESS: Yes.

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9 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: -- new Liberia now.  
10 Okay. The next, last question --

11 THE WITNESS: And then, then, of course, there is  
12 poverty in our country.

13 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you.

14 THE WITNESS: It doesn't matter. You know, a  
15 minister, a minister who works for the government, in office,  
16 and he has no money to send his kid to school. He has no  
17 money to buy the proper attire that is proper to his  
18 position. He does not have the money to provide a home. A  
19 Lebanese comes before him and offer him money in an envelope  
20 under the table, he will take it. So poverty is an issue.

21 The second thing is lack of information. That is  
22 education. Liberia must be educated. And they are now doing  
23 so in droves in this country. There are Liberians that are  
24 going to graduate school, not only a bachelor's degree, who  
25 are going to graduate school; the elements of what it takes

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1 to build a society. These Liberians will go home and say,  
2 wait a minute, what are we doing here? So I'm optimistic  
3 about, about that.

4 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay. My last  
5 question. First of all, would you consider yourself a part  
6 of the progressive group that came to this country to make  
7 change in the early '70s?

8 THE WITNESS: Well, some of the progressives have  
9 now transformed themselves into common beggars --

10 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay.

11 THE WITNESS: -- from what I, what I've seen.  
12 Some of the progressives have now transformed themselves into

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13 common beggars. They are now ultraconservatives. And  
14 conservatives do not look upon change as being viable. I'm  
15 not going to name names, but I can tell you ...

16 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: I understand that.  
17 My point is, I'm trying to understand a lesson learned from  
18 our past. We chose a route of violence to change the system.

19 THE WITNESS: The only person that I worked for  
20 that appreciated the idea of analysis into giving, into any  
21 decision making was Dr. Sawyer, because he said -- I give him  
22 homework. If he want something doing, how can I do this. I  
23 say, sit down, and I say this is what is required. That is  
24 the only person.

25 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you. The

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1 question I was trying to get at, my last question to you, I  
2 need your input, is we'd made a decision in the early '70s to  
3 choose violent revolution to bring economic and social  
4 justice --

5 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

6 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: -- to our country.  
7 The aftermath of that has shown us that it was a tragic  
8 mistake, because with the ignorance level and the illiteracy,  
9 et cetera, the leadership lack of qualification, we only  
10 ended up destroying ourselves and still having to face the  
11 very things we're trying to get rid of, the corruption, et  
12 cetera. So as we look back, and you as an expert person now,  
13 advising and giving us help, what would you -- would you say  
14 that this is something that we would repeat, we will repeat  
15 if it comes up again, or would there be an alternative? Is  
16 there another way to deal with the system, assuming

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17 conditions remain the same?

18 THE WITNESS: well, you know, Mr. Coleman, change  
19 is, depends on information as well as generation. You know,  
20 it is said that no individual is born bad or good. That  
21 condition is a function of social and economic environment in  
22 which the individual is born. So now what it means, we have  
23 to reeducate a lot of people, many people. We have to  
24 reeducate them. And, of course, the younger people must also  
25 be subjected to this type of education. One of the reasons

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1 that the communists were killing people, they said they want  
2 to, they want to create a communist, someone who is born into  
3 the communist ideology. If you are 50 years old, they get  
4 rid of you. So in our country today we have to reeducate  
5 most, most of our policymakers to think along the lines of  
6 doing it with, with tribalism, with ethnicity, with people  
7 who do not have the education required in order to move  
8 forward. There are many arguments, I've written many things  
9 on this issue and, like I said, we will be available to  
10 assist in any manner that is necessary. I think the  
11 Commission is sitting at the point where you could bring  
12 change into, into our country.

13 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you very much.

14 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you very  
15 much, Mr. Gbala, for coming and making this statement.

16 THE WITNESS: What was --

17 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Can you hear me?

18 THE WITNESS: My hearing is not so good, so good  
19 today.

20 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. I think  
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21 it's on. I just said thank you very much for coming again.  
22 I have one or two questions for you. You see we're speaking  
23 reconciliation, we're speaking reconciliation, and we know  
24 that one of the strengths of reconciliation is acknowledgment  
25 that something did go wrong, acknowledgment by all of us,

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1 whether we play a direct or indirect role.

2 THE WITNESS: Mrs. Washington, I can't, I don't  
3 understand you. Go closer to your, yeah, speak a little  
4 louder. Ah-hah.

5 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Can you hear me  
6 now?

7 THE WITNESS: Yeah, I can hear you now.

8 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: I was saying that  
9 we are speaking reconciliation here today, or at these  
10 proceedings, and one of the strengths of reconciliation is  
11 that we can acknowledge that something did go wrong, and  
12 sometimes some of us directly or indirectly assume  
13 responsibility for some of what has gone wrong. When  
14 commissioners say to victims or people after they testify,  
15 we're very sorry for what happened, it doesn't mean that we  
16 were there and killed the family members or whatsoever but,  
17 you know, just assuming a degree of responsibility makes it  
18 easier for the reconciliation process and it validates your,  
19 your victims and the many people who were hurt.

20 You saw the, the U.S. Ambassador came here today,  
21 Ambassador Herman Cohen, and after his testimony I guess he  
22 figured something was left out. He came back and apologized  
23 to the Liberian people for the limited role he said that the  
24 U.S. played in stopping the carnage. He thought the U.S.

25 could have done more and he admitted that they didn't. So

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1 even though he told us that he personally lobbied to end the  
2 war on behalf of Liberia but he was overruled by other,  
3 higher policy makers at the State Department, but he still  
4 came back and said he was sorry, I guess on behalf of the  
5 American people. That was an heroic thing to do. Having  
6 said that, I will go into my question.

7           You stated that you are not a member, you were never  
8 a member of any of the warring factions that destroyed the  
9 country. But in the meantime we know that you worked with  
10 all of these different governments, including the government  
11 of Mr. Samuel Doe, which was known for human rights abuses  
12 and violations, you served in a senior position, you were one  
13 of the, a brainchild behind the NDPL, which rigged the 1985  
14 elections, Doe government imprisoned its opposition,  
15 suppressed student leaders and what have you. And then,  
16 secondly, the AFL was termed during several peace conferences  
17 as a party to the conflict because of its role it played, not  
18 in protecting the general citizenry of the Republic of  
19 Liberia, but it was reduced to a tribal army that targeted  
20 its citizens and caused the death of many of Liberian  
21 citizens, and the AFL at the time represented the government  
22 which you served even up to that point as a senior advisor.

23           My question here is how do you reconcile the  
24 statement that you were not a member of any warring faction  
25 or any, or any party that destroyed Liberia? It is assumed

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1 that by this statement you are exonerating yourself for  
2 whatever has happened to the country. Can you just comment  
3 on that, please?

4 THE WITNESS: Reconcile what? what, what are you  
5 asking did I reconcile?

6 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: My question here,  
7 Mr. witness, is you played a very major role in the Doe  
8 government up to the point of the war, you also served in the  
9 Taylor government, and you know Taylor is now in exile facing  
10 trial for gross human rights violations. How can you then  
11 assume that because you were not a part of any warring  
12 faction, quote-unquote, therefore you are probably indirectly  
13 not responsible for any of what went wrong in the country? I  
14 mean assuming by your statement.

15 THE WITNESS: I didn't get that.

16 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay, let me  
17 question, let me rephrase the question. Do you think it's a  
18 justifiable statement --

19 THE WITNESS: Did you hear what she said?

20 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Mr. witness.

21 THE WITNESS: Reconcile what statement? what,  
22 that's what I --

23 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: I'm trying to  
24 rephrase the question.

25 THE WITNESS: Yeah, what page are you on?

□

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1 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. Let me  
2 rephrase the question. Do you think, do you think you should  
3 assume any responsibility for what happened to Liberia in  
4 terms of the destruction only to the fact that, one, you

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5 worked in the Doe government in the senior position and that  
6 government basically saw the country go into a brutal civil  
7 war, you were also part of the progressive movement of  
8 Liberia, which a lot of Liberians want to also partially  
9 blame for misleading the country into whatever destruction  
10 there have been and, secondly, the AFL was termed by many,  
11 through many of the peace conferences, as a faction because  
12 it didn't play the role of a protector of the state of the  
13 Liberian people; rather it, it was committing atrocities  
14 against the Liberian people. So do you think, as a senior  
15 member of government, you should assume any responsibility,  
16 whether moral or not, also for what has happened to Liberia  
17 in terms of the destruction?

18 THE WITNESS: I don't understand what she said.

19 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay.

20 THE WITNESS: I don't understand what she said.

21 Can you, can you interpret that?

22 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: No, no, I will go  
23 to the next question.

24 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: You were not  
25 a member --

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1 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Sheikh, Sheikh --

2 THE WITNESS: I was not --

3 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: That's okay.

4 Okay. I --

5 THE WITNESS: I was not a member of any, I was not  
6 a member of any fighting group.

7 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Yes, you --

8 THE WITNESS: I was not a leader, not a member of

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9 any fighting group.

10 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Yes, yes, you  
11 stated that, sir. That's okay.

12 THE WITNESS: That's what I said. Now what flows  
13 from that to --

14 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay, my next  
15 question, my next question, Mr. witness, I would just like to  
16 know, out of curiosity, you served as advisor to many, many  
17 administrations; the administration of the late Samuel Doe,  
18 Charles Taylor, the interim government of Amos Sawyer, Ruth  
19 Perry, Doe when he was a military leader, Doe when he became  
20 the, quote-unquote, civilian leader. Tell us, what were some  
21 of those advice you have given President Doe or President  
22 Taylor?

23 THE WITNESS: What you're saying is that how can I  
24 say, since I was advisor to the administrations --

25 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: No, I'm asking you

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1 now what kind of advice --

2 THE WITNESS: Oh, what advice did I give?

3 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Yes.

4 THE WITNESS: Well, the peace process that many of  
5 us in, in trying, first of all, in trying to bring about  
6 resolution of the immediate result of the war, that is, to  
7 find peaceful resolution to the war, and then later on seek  
8 long-term solution to unity, security in, in our country.  
9 However, on the basis of the ethnic, tribal conditions, the  
10 war was very devastating. The NPFL directed its attack upon  
11 its opponents on the basis of tribe, and therefore it was  
12 very difficult for us to seek resolution to the immediate,

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13 immediate peace process. Most of the organizations, most of  
14 the warring factions organized also along tribal lines, and  
15 the government, the government of, the government of Samuel  
16 Doe that was in when, that was in when the thing was started,  
17 then the Sawyer government of national unity, then also the  
18 council of state, all of these governmental, all of these  
19 governmental administrations were responsible to seek  
20 resolution of the peace process, and then long-term solution,  
21 and that is with the UN, the United States, with the EU, and  
22 all of these people were involved.

23 So it was not just the responsibility alone of the  
24 government in which I was, I was an advisor, but it was an  
25 international issue. But we were committed to seeing that

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1 peace is brought to Liberia, realizing that it would not be  
2 proper for us to substitute Liberian, Liberian participation  
3 with that of foreigners. So we were present in it. We went  
4 to capitals all over.

5 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: My last question.

6 THE WITNESS: So it cannot be said that we failed  
7 to provide the necessary advice that will bring peace to  
8 Liberia, simply because one of the critical issues in the  
9 Liberian war was ethnicity and tribe.

10 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. My last  
11 question, Mr. Witness. The 1985 elections were widely  
12 believed to have been rigged by the NDPL of the late  
13 President Samuel Doe. Can you give us your candid view on  
14 this? What, what do you really think? Do you think the NDPL  
15 actually won that election? Mr. Witness?

16 THE WITNESS: Yeah, he's writing that down. I



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21 evidence. If I have seen the evidence, if I have the  
22 evidence that it was rigged, oh, yes, I would have dealt with  
23 it, but I did not see the evidence.

24 It was said, in fact, Time magazine -- not Time  
25 magazine -- Newsweek came out with, came out with a report

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1 that said that it is, it is remarkable that the Liberian  
2 government could have this result in the light of the  
3 tremendous obstacles that the people face.

4 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Thank you very  
6 much, Mr. Gbala.

7 THE WITNESS: Yeah, John.

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: How would you  
9 characterize the regime of Samuel Doe; despotic, tyrannical,  
10 benevolent?

11 THE WITNESS: Which one?

12 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: The regime of  
13 Samuel Doe, how you characterize it in hindsight? Both  
14 military and civilian. How would you characterize it;  
15 despotic, tyrannical, benevolent, progressive?

16 THE WITNESS: I give you, I give you the, the  
17 analysis. My experience, two; A, a nightmare, B, an exciting  
18 laboratory forum for a student of political science. That  
19 tells you that I did not, I do not believe that it was, it  
20 was receptive to the issues of liberal democracy.

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: But given, given  
22 the fact that you served in this government --

23 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: -- until its



25 demise --

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1 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes.

2 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Did you --

3 THE WITNESS: I served in the capacity of a  
4 political and economic advisor.

5 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: So, I  
6 guess that --

7 THE WITNESS: And you and I know that in the  
8 advisor/advisee relationship, the, the performance is  
9 characterized by division of labor. All I do, write and say,  
10 if you want, if you want to go to Kakata, if you want to  
11 drive, if you want to walk, if you want to fly, these are the  
12 consequences, and then you are the decision, you are the  
13 decision maker. Pick, pick, pick which one you want. There  
14 is nothing I can do about it.

15 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: So against that  
16 backdrop, would you share blame for his failures?

17 THE WITNESS: Do what?

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: would you share  
19 blame for his failures?

20 THE WITNESS: Do I personally?

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Yeah, would you  
22 accept, share blame for his failures?

23 THE WITNESS: You can say so, because, you see,  
24 most, most people equate advisors with implementers;  
25 therefore, if they said you are to blame, of course, there is

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1 nothing I can do about it. I'm not running away from

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2 offering the advice.

3 For example, the issue of the Observer. The  
4 government closed the Observer, and I wrote a scathing  
5 memorandum that the press report what it sees. A press is  
6 necessary in a functioning democracy because it is the eyes  
7 and ears of the government. Closing it is inappropriate. I  
8 was suspended. So you see, these, these are the problems you  
9 have. You have to face the realities. You have to be, you  
10 have to be willing to accept the consequences of what you do,  
11 and that's what I did.

12 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Do you recall  
13 that the late Minister of State John Ramsey at one point in  
14 time wrote a letter, which was leaked to the press, turned  
15 out to be very, very controversial, advising the president  
16 the steps to take in order to consolidate power. On  
17 reflection and hindsight, can you say that such advice coming  
18 from the minister of state at that time was a contributing  
19 factor to the crisis that we had?

20 THE WITNESS: No. As a matter of fact, Mr. Ramsey  
21 and I didn't get along because he comes from, in my view now,  
22 he comes from that, that background that does not make  
23 rational analysis to any issue. For example, it was Ramsey's  
24 recommendation that produced the Doe/Quiwonkpa issue. And we  
25 wrote, we wrote very strongly on Ramsey, because Ramsey was

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1 an arch conservative who did not, you know, give any inch of  
2 argument to another, to an opposing argument. They do not  
3 realize that opposition is indispensable.

4 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: At one time you  
5 opined openly, quite openly that the Krahn people, quote,

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6 were endangered species.

7 THE WITNESS: Oh, yeah, I said that.

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Do you still hold  
9 that view today?

10 THE WITNESS: I said that on my way -- in fact, I  
11 can I remember that. I said that. And as a Krahn man, at  
12 that time, you know, when the war started, many of the Krahn  
13 people and Mandingo people would run, ran, ran away from  
14 Monrovia, fled Monrovia into Sierra Leone. And I had a gown,  
15 I was wearing a gown, so somebody say, you wearing a gown. I  
16 say, yeah, Krahn people and Mandingo people are endangered  
17 species because the NPFL directed its activities against  
18 these two tribes.

19 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Now --

20 THE WITNESS: But I believe this is why I, I  
21 strongly believe that the issue of ethnicity, the issue of  
22 tribe should not be an argument in our political, in a  
23 political dispensation.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Now Charles  
25 Taylor, you worked along with him in the Union of Liberian

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1 Associations in the Americas. As a matter of fact, you were  
2 on a delegation that went to Liberia, and --

3 THE WITNESS: who?

4 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Charles Taylor.

5 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes.

6 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: And as you said,  
7 the NPFL directed its antipathy towards the Krahn and  
8 Mandingo people. Taylor was elected president, you accepted  
9 an appointment to serve with him, I suppose on the basis of

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10 your long-standing friendship, but after the, after the  
11 murder of Samuel Dokie and his family, did that raise a red  
12 flag and a, to you, as what was coming and -- but you  
13 continued to serve. Can you provide some reasons why you  
14 would serve a leader, a government that's considered brutal  
15 and oppressive, up to the point where you parted company only  
16 when you were charged with treason?

17 THE WITNESS: well, you know, Charlie and I were  
18 friends. We started here in the United States. When I was  
19 president of the Union, Charles was the board chairman. We  
20 marched the streets of the major cities in this, in this  
21 country in protest to our political leaders at home. At that  
22 time Taylor was one of the most loyal member of the, of the  
23 Union. So I was really shocked when I heard that he was, he  
24 was leading a coup d'etat, or an insurgency. So when he said  
25 to me in Monrovia to go to Gbarnga, I said back to him, I

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1 say, Charlie, you're joking. You know, the issue now is that  
2 Krahn people and Mandingo people are targeted. I can't come  
3 over there. He went on radio to say, well, Bai Gbala is  
4 scared to come in here, he think I will kill him, his life  
5 isn't worth a dime. So I say, well, that's, this is why I'm  
6 not going to come over there. But you see, when he finally  
7 became president, I was then serving as advisor to Amos  
8 Sawyer, so when he became president, it mean that all of us  
9 had to give up our positions, so I went home. A week later  
10 he sent Blamo Nelson, now Taylor and Blamo Nelson began here  
11 in the United States, sent Blamo Nelson to the house, he say  
12 he want to see me. I went to the mansion. It was then, T.  
13 Ernest Eastman was then the minister, minister of state. The

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14 president say he want you to join, to join his staff. So I  
15 say, no, I don't think so. As it is right now, Taylor has  
16 more advisors than Babangida, and he doesn't have the money  
17 to pay them. And also Taylor's problem is to look at the  
18 economy, he does not have to have me in there, so I went  
19 home. He sent back again. He say, you know, I can't be  
20 president, and you said now all I want you to do is to  
21 accompany me to Togo. At that time he was going to an ECOWAS  
22 meeting in Togo. He come to me, because you were  
23 international advisors, therefore I want you to go along with  
24 me. So I say fine. We went to Togo. We were there for  
25 three days and we came back. Later on he say, okay, I want

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1 you, I want to give you the portfolio of international  
2 advisor. I felt then, like I felt all the time, it's better  
3 to bring about change from within than without. But I was  
4 wrong. Only nine months later I didn't know that I was on  
5 the list to be eliminated.

6 On the 18th of September, hell broke out on Camp  
7 Johnson Road, and I was supposed to be the ringleader.  
8 That's how I was arrested with, with 12 others; tried,  
9 convicted and sent to jail. If it were not for the  
10 international community, including the United States and the  
11 UN, I probably would have died in jail.

12 So this is how Taylor and I got together. We were  
13 friends here in the, in the United States. He was then one  
14 of the most loyal member. But you will remember that it was  
15 Charles Taylor who went and arrested most of the people that  
16 were tried and executed. It was Charles Taylor. After the  
17 coup d'etat, Taylor, Taylor went and put on military uniform,

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18 took some soldiers and arrested most of the people that were,  
19 that were killed on the beach. That was Charles Taylor. I  
20 was here in the United States. Now why I saw that, I was in  
21 the office of Representative Conyers, John Conyers from  
22 Michigan. He had a Time magazine with colored photographs of  
23 the execution on the beach. He say, is that what you're  
24 talking about? So this is how it is.

25 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Now while you

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1 were detained during Taylor, there -- some detainees were  
2 taken out of jail and executed, I suppose some of your  
3 colleagues, like the late Thomas Doeway and others. Are you  
4 aware of those who carried out those executions?

5 THE WITNESS: Who do you mean, the Samuel Doe  
6 execution?

7 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: No, while you  
8 were detained --

9 THE WITNESS: Sure.

10 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: -- during the  
11 government of Charles Taylor --

12 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

13 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: -- there were  
14 some colleagues of yours who were also charged --

15 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

16 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: -- like Thomas  
17 Doeway, the late Colonel Thomas Doeway, and there were  
18 reports where they disappeared from the cells. Do you have  
19 any idea as to who are responsible for their executions?

20 THE WITNESS: Okay. It is said that, it is said,  
21 not personal, you know, experience, it is said that Nathan,  
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22 Nathan what his name? Huh? General Nathan, Nathan. The guy  
23 who was -- huh?

24 VOICE: Benjamin Yeaten.

25 THE WITNESS: Benjamin Yeaten, the guy who was

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1 supervisor of Charles Taylor's SSS, gave the instructions for  
2 the SS station in Gbarnga to arrest Dokie and his wife.

3 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: No, I don't mean  
4 Dokie.

5 THE WITNESS: This, this was Samuel Dokie.

6 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: No, I'm not  
7 referring to Dokie. I'm referring to Thomas Doeway, Colonel  
8 Thomas Doeway and others who were accused along with you and  
9 charged for treason, and some of them were taken out of the  
10 cell and executed. Are you aware of those who were  
11 responsible for those executions?

12 THE WITNESS: No. No. I do not have security  
13 responsibilities. I do not put my nose into it. Only  
14 policy.

15 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: No, you were also  
16 a detainee at the time.

17 THE WITNESS: Huh?

18 VOICE: Thomas Doeway.

19 THE WITNESS: Oh, Thomas Doeway? well, those,  
20 those, those were, were taken out, it is said, on the night  
21 of the September 18th, on the night of the September 18th  
22 incident. Some people fled with Johnson, with Roosevelt  
23 Johnson, and it is said that Thomas Doeway and others were  
24 the supporters of Samuel Doe. So elements of the Taylor  
25 government went to the post stockade and took out Thomas

1 Doeway and some of those people and took them to, to  
2 Schieffelin and shot them on the beach. Now this is what  
3 I've been told. Not with my eyes.

4 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: who were, who  
5 were those responsible for doing that, as you were told?

6 THE WITNESS: Thomas Doeway, he was colonel, a  
7 colonel in the Armed Forces.

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: who told, who was  
9 responsible for taking them out and executing them?

10 THE WITNESS: That I do not know. I do not know  
11 the names of the individuals. In fact, that, that issue was  
12 tried when we were in jail. It is said that they will send  
13 people to take us out of the jail and kill us. But we were  
14 able to avoid that because we wrote and smuggled out of the  
15 jail and it appeared in the press, and so they, they didn't  
16 do that.

17 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Now my last  
18 question to you --

19 THE WITNESS: Because if we were at the BTC it  
20 probably would have happened.

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Now my last  
22 question to you. When you were sentenced by the court and  
23 appealed your, appealed the court's decision, the lower  
24 court's decision to the supreme court, the supreme court  
25 added an additional 20 years -- an additional ten years. Do

1 you have any bitter, do you hold any bitterness as a result



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2 of that decision --

3 THE WITNESS: Of course.

4 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: -- and do you see  
5 the courts as a facilitator of an unjust sentence?

6 THE WITNESS: Well, you see, this is why I believe  
7 that the Commission will be a new renewal in, in our approach  
8 to, to political organization. The courts must be separated  
9 from political decision makers. The courts in those days  
10 were Charles Taylor's, extension of Charles Taylor's hand.  
11 Musso, you know, Musso was then chief justice. The lower  
12 court brought a decision of guilty against us and gave us ten  
13 years. We took appeal to the supreme court. The supreme  
14 court not only affirmed the lower court decision but added  
15 ten years. Added ten years to this decision. Of course we  
16 were bitter, I was very bitter, because it was illegal. In  
17 our law the court could not do that unless they can say that  
18 the decision of the court is not, is not consistent with a  
19 given law. That they did not, they did not say. In fact, I,  
20 I've written on that decision and it's going to be published  
21 very soon.

22 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Does this current  
23 bench --

24 THE WITNESS: Huh?

25 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: -- present any

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1 hope for you? Does this, does the current composition of the  
2 court present any hope for you?

3 THE WITNESS: The, the current position of the  
4 court now?

5 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Yeah.

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6 THE WITNESS: I know nothing about the court, the  
7 Lewis court. I know, I know Counselor Lewis very well, but  
8 I, I don't know what they are doing. I'm not a lawyer so I  
9 don't know what they are doing right now, but I believe, I  
10 believe that the courts should be independent of, of  
11 politics.

12 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Thank you very  
13 much.

14 THE WITNESS: That, that, that, that an individual  
15 who is charged will be tried on the basis of the body of laws  
16 that we have in our country that are, that are applicable to  
17 the charges against that individual. In Liberia, that is not  
18 the case. And this is where some of our young leaders today  
19 did not, did not follow President Tubman. You know,  
20 President Tubman might have done something wrong, but he did  
21 everything with class. This is one thing that I've said. To  
22 consciously and publicly influence the court politically  
23 would be something that is illegal. And I think, I think, I  
24 think the Commission has a responsibility to address that  
25 issue.

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1 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Thank you very  
2 much.

3 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much,  
5 Mr. witness, for taking your time out today to give your  
6 testimony to the Commission.

7 THE WITNESS: Can you hear what she said? I can't  
8 hear her. I can't hear.

9 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much --



14 of democracy. So this is how I look at the two.

15 Now from, from 1847 up to a change in government,  
16 they had defined why they took over the government, but those  
17 days continued, corruption continued, abuses of human rights  
18 continued, even though they introduced a new constitution  
19 that departed from the past, yet they did things that were  
20 not, that were not consistent. If you look at the new  
21 constitution that we have now, Article 27.b, I think you see  
22 what, what I wrote in there, Article 27.b that denies  
23 citizenship to non-Negros, it's a violation of civil human  
24 rights. You cannot deny a man to become citizen simply  
25 because of his race. This is against the law. And here we

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1 are criticizing other people. We took South Africa to court,  
2 and we're doing the same thing. So you see, it's not much  
3 different.

4 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Mr. Gbala, one  
5 last, one last question for you, I'm just curious. You keep  
6 referring to "they," you keep --

7 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Can I finish?

8 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: I'm sorry, you  
9 said one question.

10 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Now this is just a  
11 follow-up question because I actually intended to ask one.  
12 But most have said that Doe was a good man but the people  
13 around him didn't give him good advice. What can you say  
14 about that?

15 THE WITNESS: Well, as an individual, I would say  
16 Doe was a good man, but the problem was, you know, we  
17 listened to different kinds of people. You know, they are

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18 what you call the kitchen cabinet. In any organization, any  
19 political setting you have the kitchen cabinet; relatives and  
20 individuals who see the way you should do things to advance  
21 their cause. There are many people around Samuel Doe who  
22 would say, ah, you listen to those people? These people have  
23 designs of their own; therefore, don't listen to them. And  
24 this, this is one of the major problems that we have had  
25 during the PRC.

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1 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you for coming.

2 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Mr. Gbala, I just  
3 want to correct something you said concerning the report of  
4 the TRC being presented to the government for, I can't  
5 remember the word, for approval. Our report to the  
6 legislature will not be presented for approval, but for  
7 implementation. So I just want to make that correction.  
8 Thank you.

9 THE WITNESS: Well, doesn't, doesn't that imply,  
10 doesn't that imply approval? You will not implement it, you  
11 will give it to the government. That's what you say.

12 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Yeah, but they are  
13 making the same, being put into place, and I will put into  
14 the, the --

15 THE WITNESS: All right.

16 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: -- act to make  
17 sure that the recommendations will be implemented.

18 THE WITNESS: Okay. If that is the case, then I  
19 am happy.

20 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: If you have a copy  
21 of the TRC act and you read it, you will find it there.

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22 Thank you.

23 THE WITNESS: I'm happy.

24 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. My last  
25 question was when my colleague, Commissioner Syllah, asked

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1 you to compare the government of President Samuel Doe to, I  
2 think, William Tolbert, and you made some analogy, but you  
3 kept referring to "they," "they" and "they." I was just  
4 wondering if you, if you didn't see yourself as a part of  
5 those governments that you served to the end, and if you  
6 didn't see yourself as part of these policies and part of  
7 activities and decisions that those governments engaged in?  
8 I was just wondering.

9 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes. If you're, if you're  
10 talking about being a part of it, of course I have been a  
11 part of it, I have been a major part of it. But I defined  
12 what that part is responsible to perform. I am not asking  
13 for, you know, excusal. No. I'm not saying forgive me for  
14 this. I did what I was required to do diligently and  
15 comprehensively.

16 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you.

17 THE WITNESS: And there is record to that. My  
18 life in, in politics in Liberia has been an open book.

19 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Yes, Mr. Witness,  
20 just for information, I hope you will read the TRC act  
21 because many of, like I call you now teacher, many of what  
22 you advise, perhaps people like you and those of civil  
23 society who, who brought about the promulgation of that act,  
24 they call for perhaps maybe 20, ten more years that suffering  
25 could add, they call that this TRC should make recommendation

1 for judicial reform. One of the institutional reform that we  
2 should make recommendation to the government is judicial  
3 reform, so probably when bad things happen to people, or  
4 government or nation, as a result of that, you look for a  
5 positive way to move forward. That's why we said confronting  
6 our dark past for a better future, so we have judicial  
7 reform, institutional judicial reform. So anything that you  
8 have, you can just give it to us. I head judicial reform,  
9 and definitely I want to say again that the TRC is together  
10 to do the work for which they took the oath to do, to make  
11 recommendations, and we intend to do it to the end.

12 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Very quickly,  
14 Mr. Witness, as an advisor to the PRC government and then the  
15 subsequent elective government, did you confer with the  
16 president regularly?

17 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes. You mean the chairman?

18 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: The chairman and the  
19 president.

20 THE WITNESS: The PRC consists of two  
21 institutions; the council, which is responsible for  
22 legislative affairs, and then --

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yes, I --

24 THE WITNESS: -- the chairman who is, who is  
25 responsible for administrative affairs, executive affairs.

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1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: So you conferred with  
2 him regularly. In your statement you said your experience

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3 was a nightmare?

4 THE WITNESS: How's that?

5 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your experience working  
6 with the PRC was a nightmare, and that the officers of the  
7 PRC were ignorant.

8 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.

9 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Are there mistakes of  
10 the PRC you can acknowledge today?

11 THE WITNESS: You mean a document with respect to  
12 this organization set up?

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: The operations, the  
14 functions, the governance of the PRC.

15 THE WITNESS: well, yes, I think, I think most  
16 what we did was to organize. You know, when we went home we  
17 organized the council and the executive, and they are --

18 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: well, we went through --

19 THE WITNESS: -- they are well-informed of their  
20 responsibilities. Now I'm not at home right now where all  
21 the documents are.

22 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Are there mistakes of  
23 the PRC and the Doe government that you can acknowledge  
24 today? That's the question.

25 THE WITNESS: Huh? Oh, yeah, there are several.

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1 I said that earlier, that there were monumental mistakes that  
2 were made.

3 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: For example?

4 THE WITNESS: It was like a nightmare because  
5 these young people were not trained in the art of politics,  
6 and so the mistakes were bound to be made.



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7 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: For example?

8 THE WITNESS: For example, the issues of housing,  
9 people's, a PRC member moving into people's homes.

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: That's one.

11 THE WITNESS: A man like Pennue, Pennue beating of  
12 a minister. There are many things that they did that were,  
13 that were not, as a matter of fact, Pennue was suspended --

14 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: wanton killings?

15 THE WITNESS: Huh?

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: wanton killings.

17 THE WITNESS: Members of the PRC killing somebody,  
18 not that I know.

19 (Audience reaction.)

20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: First of all, during the  
21 Doe government, after Doe was elected --

22 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- were there wanton  
24 killings by that government also?

25 THE WITNESS: Not that I know about.

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1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.

2 THE WITNESS: Not official killings that I know  
3 about.

4 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Thank you. what?  
5 Did you qualify it?

6 THE WITNESS: Hmm?

7 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I think you said not,  
8 something killing, you qualified the killings, and I didn't  
9 get you clear.

10 THE WITNESS: well, if you're saying if there were  
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11 killings by members of the PRC, I say there may be, there may  
12 not be, but not that I know about.

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Actually I spoke of the  
14 PRC government and the Doe government. But the last question  
15 I want to ask has to do with the role of ULAA and other  
16 advocates for change, their role in the coup and in the  
17 government that subsequently evolved out of the coup d'etat.

18 THE WITNESS: The ULAA?

19 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: (Nods head.)

20 THE WITNESS: Well, you know, I look, I look at  
21 ULAA as being a kind of organization that is organized to  
22 kind of serve as a watchdog and to promote the interests of  
23 Liberians in this country as well as, you know, outside the  
24 country. You will read, there's, there's a document I  
25 enclosed in here that is called "ULAA Leaders Must Be

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1 Liberian Citizens." We traced the development of ULAA, the  
2 history of ULAA, what it was, why it was organized and what  
3 it should do and what it has done in that document, and so I  
4 think that ULAA in this country should be an organization  
5 that will foster the interests of Liberians here. For  
6 example, we, as a nation have not --

7 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I was talking about  
8 actually ULAA in the 1980 government.

9 THE WITNESS: Huh?

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I was talking about the  
11 role of ULAA, elements of ULAA and advocates for change at  
12 that time and the role it played in the 1980 government.

13 THE WITNESS: In the United States Government or  
14 in --

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15 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: The government in  
16 Liberia.

17 THE WITNESS: Yeah. At this point in time?

18 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: In 1980.

19 THE WITNESS: Oh, in 19 -- in 1980 you will see,  
20 you will see our arguments in this paper. We outlined what  
21 we believe, what we were concerned about in this document.  
22 This document was written March 11, 1980. It was delivered  
23 March 11, 1980.

24 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: That was before the  
25 coup.

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1 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

2 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I'm talking about the  
3 government that evolved after the coup. Anyway, thank you,  
4 sir.

5 THE WITNESS: well, the government evolved into  
6 the coup. Charles Taylor was a member of ULAA when he took  
7 over, and therefore we got into an argument about his respect  
8 of ULAA. He did not. And we argued that ULAA is in a  
9 suitable position to advocate on behalf of our government.  
10 Taylor did not see it that way.

11 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay, Mr. Gbala, we want  
12 to thank you very much for coming and sharing.

13 Ladies and gentlemen, we want to thank you for  
14 joining us today for yet another event of public hearings  
15 here in Minnesota. Our session today has come to a close and  
16 we will resume tomorrow morning at 9:00. We thank you very  
17 much for your patience and your support. Do have a pleasant  
18 evening.

Bai Gbala

19 (Applause.)  
20 (Proceedings concluded at 6:11 p.m.)  
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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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3 I, ELIZABETH GANGL, a Registered Professional  
4 Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages of  
5 typewritten material constitute an accurate verbatim  
6 stenographic record taken by me of the proceedings  
7 aforementioned before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
8 of Liberia, on the 12th day of June, 2008, at the time and  
9 place specified.

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14 DATED: July 2, 2008.

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